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CIA Official Blasts Spy Unit's Critics



Gen. Vernon Walters
... 'times change'

ATLANTA (UPI) — The deputy director of the CIA said yesterday critics of CIA activities are diverting attention from threats to national security and playing upon an American tendency to "flagellate ourselves as a people."

Lt. Gen. Vernon A. Walters said "the real issue" is not the truth or untruth of charges that the CIA kept secret files on Americans at home and plotted the demise of other governments abroad, including the murder of unfriendly leaders.

"The real issue before us today is: Will the United States have eyes and ears, or will it stumble into the future—a blind and deaf giant, until the day it has to choose between abject humiliation and nuclear blackmail," Walters told the Atlanta Rotary Club.

WALTERS SAID, "All too often, we spend our time flagellating ourselves as a people, pointing out our own mistakes, pointing out our own shortcomings, pointing out all the terrible things we've done."

He said his former boss, ex-CIA Director Richard Helms, ordered agents in 1972 never even to consider assassination as a means of eliminating troublesome opposition in foreign countries. He said, however, that CIA critics are attacking the agency now for events that occurred 10 to 15 years ago.

"Times change," said Walters. "At the times people were talking about Fidel Castro, he was shooting people in the national stadium, in front of the television cameras."

Walters did not say specifically that those who wanted to kill Castro were CIA agents or

WALTERS, A military intelligence officer for three decades before his CIA appointment by former President Nixon three years ago, said the news media has largely overlooked favorable findings in the report on CIA activities by Vice President Rockefeller's study commission.

"We are spending nearly all of our time now investigating and answering charges on matters concerning the 50s and the 60s," said Walters. "I'm concerned about the end of the 70s and the early 80s."

He said that despite efforts at detente with the Soviet

Union, "we face a situation where the United States, in its current relationships with the rest of the world, is in the toughest situation since Valley Forge."

He said "certainly we have done some things that we should not have" at home, but that the CIA's wrong-doing should not jeopardize its role in keeping the nation's defense agencies advised of what potential enemies are doing abroad.